

Our import and export regulations have on the whole been liberal and have promoted the interchange of literature and artistic materials, although we have yet to implement the "Florence Agreement" approved by the Senate in February 1960. Protected by the first amendment, we have been reasonably free of Federal censorship of the printed word. Our income tax laws on the other hand have been distinctly more burdensome on the income from literature and artistic creation—income from copyrighted materials—than on income received from technical creation represented by patented inventions.

I think that these examples, which by no means constitute a complete list, will suffice to illustrate that our national record on these indirect measures has been spotty but by no means bad on the whole and has been improving. Nevertheless, one of the bills before you, H.R. 4172, the proposed Federal Advisory Council on the Arts, would, we believe, be very helpful in improving the situation still further; and there are a number of important problems still outstanding. Such an advisory group would be able to identify and to point out those numerous areas in which Federal legislation and administrative action, often designed for quite different purposes, impinge unfavorably on literature and the arts. There is at present no Federal agency with an overall responsibility in this area, although in some respects existing agencies such as the Office of Education and the Library of Congress may be able to perform this function to some extent. But there is no specific watchdog for the arts comparable to the Department of Labor, the Department of Agriculture, the Department of Commerce and many other departments and agencies which in a sense "represent" various industries and professions in the Federal Government.

With respect to direct measures to encourage the arts, various of which are incorporated in some of the bills under consideration which have been introduced in this and earlier sessions, we would have serious reservations about taking any major steps in this direction without very careful further study and consideration. I can do no better in stating these reservations than to quote from a book which appeared a few years ago, "The Literary Situation," by Malcolm Cowley, the well-known poet, literary critic, teacher, editor, and lecturer. In a chapter on the relationship of the Federal Government to the arts Mr. Cowley sums up the pros and cons of direct Federal support as follows:

That Congress should establish a bureau of fine arts, with money to spend for literary prizes and fellowships, is a much more tempting notion, but there are a few serious arguments against it. One is that such a bureau would be involved in politics, with its prizes going to writers whose opinions were politically correct at the time, and to another group of writers in the next administration. Another argument is the increased danger of Federal censorship; if Congress were spending money for literature, it would try to encourage some types of literature and might soon decide that other types should be penalized. Still another argument against such a bureau is that it might lead—the more influential it became, the more surely it would lead—to an official school of art and an official theory of writing that all Americans would be expected to follow, as all Russian writers are expected to be socialist realists.

I am a pluralist in questions of literary doctrine as in theories of government. I don't like to see too much power concentrated in one man or place or party or institution. The Federal Government is our greatest institution, but I should like to see its power counterbalanced by that of smaller institutions, not only State and local governments, but also the churches, the schools, the universities,